No. 2

THE BIBLE;

A BOOK FOR THE WORLD.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

CADETS' BIBLE SOCIETY

OF THE VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE,

MAY 1ST, 1849.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE "CADETS' BIBLE SOCIETY" has existed for nine years. Besides contributing funds to the Bible cause, this Society annually selects some gentleman to deliver an address, as a means of extending and deepening an interest in the Word of God among the students of the Institute, and others in the surrounding community. The following Address was prepared and delivered, in accordance with this custom. It was written with no view to publication, and is now presented to the publick, at the request of the Society, through its committee, Messrs. J. W. MASSIE, E. T. FRISTOE, and S. GARLAND. The author regrets that want of time forbids that careful revisal which might better adapt it for its extended sphere of usefulness, as well as render it more worthy of the kind partiality which has dictated the request for its publication.

Such as it is, he respectfully dedicates it

TO THE YOUNG MEN OF VIRGINIA.

ADDRESS.

Young Gentlemen :—

It is with no ordinary pleasure I have accepted your invitation to address you on this interesting anniversary of your Society. For young men, as a class of citizens, I feel a sincere regard. For you, this sentiment is enhanced by many considerations. You are the younger sons of our common mother, our beloved Virginia. Under her fostering care, you are preparing for the duties of citizenship, in this great confederacy of republicks. Around you are clustered the most interesting associations. For you, many hearts are throbbing with the tender emotions of fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers. No one, with the common sentiments of patriotism, and the common sympathies of our nature, cau view such an assembly with indifference. On this occasion, you invest yourselves with additional claims to regard. You have identified yourselves with the best of all causes,—the dissemination of Divine Truth —the extension of the blessings of the gospel. To be selected by my young countrymen, to perform any duty within my power, would be esteemed an honour, as a mark of their confidence. To be selected by you, at once to represent your views to the publick, and enliven your zeal in the noble enterprise before you, I again frankly assure you, has afforded me no ordinary pleasure.

The name and objects of your Society suggest my theme. It is announced in one word—The Bible. How vast and comprehensive such a theme! The impressive memorials of the past, the momentous realities of the present, and the sublime prospects of the future, are associated with the revelations of this Book.

Instead of engaging your attention on any one of the nume-

rous interesting particulars presented in a field so boundless, it may be more profitable and pleasing to consider some general views, which may furnish materials or suggest hints for courses of more minute investigation, under circumstances more favourable, by leisure and retirement.

I. The Book itself is the subject of a most interesting and wonderful history. Apart from all considerations touching its divine authority or moral influence, no other volume presents such claims on the attention of men of letters.

It is a very old Book. Its most modern portions have existed for more than seventeen centuries; its most ancient for more than three thousand years. The language in which the Old Testament was chiefly written, ceased to be a vernacular tongue four hundred years before the Christian era; that of the New Testament has been a dead language for about nine centuries. The Books of Moses, when written, were deposited in the holiest place of the Jewish Sanctuary. Each successive contribution to the sacred volume was preserved with like care. Every monarch was required to write out a copy for his own use, and the most learned men of the nation were employed in preparing copies for the use of the people. No precaution against wilful or incidental corruptions of the text was omitted. Our Saviour, who never failed to rebuke the Jews for any sin, never reproved them for neglecting or corrupting the sacred text. After the gospel era, the Holy Books, with the addition of the New Testament, became the common property of the world. Every care which the watchful jealousy of Jews and Christians might ensure, and the violence of persecution might require, was unremittingly bestowed, to preserve the entire volume from mutilation or alteration.

The multiplied copies of the Scriptures in the original language, and the numerous translations made for different portions of the Christian world, were the materials used by learned men, at various periods, from the fourth to the sixteenth century, for preparing, with great care, corrected editions of the Text. These materials, gathered from various nations, descending through different channels, had been so sedulously

prepared and so religiously preserved, that though thousands of literal and verbal discrepancies may have been discovered, yet the worst manuscript would not impair the Scripture foundation of an Article of Faith or a moral precept. It has been ascertained also, that by reason of the numerous and full quotations from the New Testament, contained in the works of early Christian writers, a complete copy of that part of the Bible may be gathered from those works. Thus a new and independent testimony to the purity of the Scripture text has been furnished. No other book was ever so frequently copied; none ever passed through so many hands; none was ever so often translated; yet none has been preserved so entirely pure. It deserves also to be remarked, that while a genuine Christianity has not been without her representatives among the most profound biblical scholars, we have been indebted, in a great measure, for our confidence in the purity of the text, to the labours of men, who have not adopted all the doctrines, nor illustrated all the precepts of the Word of God. Those inspired words which assure us of the divinity of Christ, announce man's depravity, and bring good news of salvation, by the imputed Righteousness of the Redeemer, have been transmitted partly by the agency of men, who rejected a Trinity from their Theology, held the history of man's fall as a fable, and ridiculed the doctrines of grace as the nonsense of superstition or a refinement of metaphysical divinity.

From the fifteenth century we trace the history of the Bible as a printed book. Using the materials already mentioned, the most learned men prepared the first printed editions. Translations into most of the European languages were speedily made. After years of careful and diligent efforts, and experiments often made at the hazard of life, early in the seventeenth century the Bible was presented to the world in our language, the result of the labours of the most learned scholars and pious men in their age. It remains to our day, at once a noble example of the accurate learning and conscientious faithfulness of the venerable translators, and of the purity and excellence of our mother tongue.

Never has a book been so often published. Millions of

copies, in many different languages, had been issued before the close of the last century. Bible Societies have rapidly increased the number. By them, more than 20,000,000 Bibles have been printed within the last forty years. Their issues now reach about 2,500,000 annually. Booksellers furnish many more. Every missionary station becomes a new fountain for diffusing these living waters. The annual increase of Bibles may be estimated at 3,000,000 copies. These are published in one hundred and fifty different languages and dialects. The price at which an entire copy of the Scriptures can be afforded, twenty-five cents, brings it within reach of the pauper. Partaking of the reproductive power of the religion it teaches, the Bible disseminates itself wherever it finds a lodgment in the heathen world. Taking the history of the last twenty years as a basis for estimates, it is highly probable, that the child is already born, who will live to know that in every nation and language on earth the Bible may be found.

It might be interesting to trace, in detail, the history of this book, in connexion with the various arts employed in perpetuating and preserving knowledge. Time permits but a summary of facts. Tablets of stone, wood, ivory, and brass, waxen surfaces, papyrus, bark, parchment, and paper of all textures, have successively received the sacred words. These have been written with every variety of instrument, in endless diversities of rude and perfect letters. The art of printing first heralded to the world the full triumph of its necromancy, in a complete edition of the Bible. The history of this Art of Arts may be traced in that of the several printed editions of the Bible, illustrating every stage of improvement, whether in the clearness and beauty of the type, the combined cheapness and rapidity of the work, or the accuracy and elegance of the result. The arts of illuminating, of gilding, and of engraving, have left connected with this book their most splendid monuments. From the day when men *bound* together the rudest tablets of wood or metal, by strings passing from one to another, to the present time of gilt Turkey, Russia, or Morocco, and luxurious velvet bindings, the pages of inspiration have been encased in every species of material and preserved by every

mode of workmanship which convenience demanded, piety suggested, or wealth could provide. In short, the various arts connected with the history of literature have exhausted their enlarged resources, and illustrated their most splendid developments, in adorning the exteriour and embellishing the pages of the Word of Life.

Meanwhile, no book has ever excited such bitter and deep-rooted hostility, and none ever awakened such warm and lasting attachment. It has been condemned, torn in pieces, and burned. Rome pagan and then Rome papal, have exhausted every artifice which malice and ingenuity could devise, and tyranny and oppression execute, to limit or suppress its circulation among the people. Armies have desolated provinces; old men and feeble women, with children clinging to their skirts and infants nestled in their bosoms, tender maidens and gentle youths, have been driven from their beds by the light of their burning houses, hunted through mountains and forests, tortured, burned, crucified, buried alive, or banished from loved homes, to brave the storms of ocean, the rigours of ice-bound coasts, and the fierceness of savage foes, for the sake of this book. Treasure was never hoarded more carefully nor surrendered more reluctantly. Curiously devised chairs and tables have been used for its concealment, or some of its precious leaves have been carefully stowed in clothing. Its choice passages were committed to memories, keenly susceptible and permanently retentive of its consolations, in times which tried men's souls; while the walls of rooms have been honoured and adorned with covering, taken from the leaves of this Tree of Life. Through all dangers it has been preserved. Still it circulates. Still it is opposed. Still it is loved. No power can suppress it. It has become, in truth, the property of the world. No other book can be traced through so many centuries; has been found, or can be found, in such quantities among so many nations, and connected with so many interests, so many persons of so many races, and of every age and rank and office. No other can claim like this, by its history, to be THE BOOK FOR THE WORLD.

II. Proceeding now, to offer some general views of the contents of this Book, our attention is arrested by its wonderful ancient history. Here is a succinct, connected, and philosophical account of the creation of the world, and important events within the first two thousand years of time, of which, otherwise, man would be profoundly ignorant. "Moses," not Herodotus, "was the Father of History." Those periods which other historians present as fabulous, and which are merged in the darkness of uncertain tradition, disgusting puerilities, and absurd fiction, he has delineated with all the confidence of certainty and minuteness of a contemporary. Here are no dreams of fancy—no mis-shapen theories—no chasms in the narrative. Historians, precedent to the age of Alexander the Great, made no pretensions to strict accuracy, and Herodotus and Xenophon have not been exempt from well sustained charges, affecting their credibility. For all this long tract of time, the chaos of profane history, as well as for the antediluvian age, the Bible affords, not only authentic, but the only reliable information. Periods so remote, according to profane history, that they are buried in doubt and obscurity, find not only their annals, but even their well ascertained antiquity, in the comparatively modern portions of this book. Nations, whose birth is lost among the songs and fables of poets, find, on its pages, the clear and definite records of a people, already numbering their age by centuries, a thousand years before the fabulists and poets were born. We contemplate with mingled emotions of awe and affection the literary fragments and relicks of an Alfred and a Bede, and men boast of a genealogy traceable to the age of William the Conqueror. Here are presented in all the perfection of yesterday, the Histories, the Laws, the Morals, and the Poetry of men, who were already the representatives of a venerable antiquity, five centuries before the land of Alfred and Bede was well known to the Romans. Here are the genealogies of men, already traceable for forty centuries, a thousand years before William the Conqueror was born.

But while thus removed beyond the application of all ordinary modes for testing historic truth, let it not be supposed, that even

the most ancient portions of this Book demand the confidence of a blind credulity. So far as the memorials of the old world have been discovered, they attest the truth of the most remarkable facts recorded by Moses. Astronomy, ethnography, philology, numismatics, and geology, so far as it may speak plainly, in the present years of its infancy, have furnished to the investigations of learned men their concurrent testimony—the more certain, by as much as more examined,—to the immense superiority of Sacred History over all the boasted chronologies and annals of India, Egypt, and China.

But the Bible is more than a Book of History. It is a Book of great principles.

The proof of God's existence, and the comprehension of His eternal power and Godhead are possible in the use of a reason not blinded by sin, since such may be understood by the things which are made. But facts evince, that these proofs have been found exceedingly inadequate, and these comprehensions exceedingly obscure, by reason of the obliquity of moral vision and obtuseness of intellect, which sin has produced. We know, by the concurring testimony of observation and revelation, that whatever man *might* have learned, he *has* learned nothing. We know, that becoming vain in their imaginations, with whatever information possessed and however obtained, by revelation or by tradition, men lost the knowledge of the true God, and changed his glory into images, made like to corruptible men, and to birds and beasts and creeping things. We know, too, that men were given over, and gave themselves to reprobate minds and vile affections, and descended in the scale of capacity for appreciating the moral virtues which adorn humanity, in the ratio of their descent from the worship and service of God, to become the votaries of absurd and degrading idolatries. Indeed, a theology derived exclusively from the light of nature, must be necessarily incomplete. Admitting that by it man might obtain and preserve the knowledge of the true God, of his own state of original purity, and his sad fall and ruin, it does not, by the slightest whisper, inform him of the remedy. Here, now, is a book, which not only denies no proposition of Natural Theology touching the being and attributes of God, but con-

firms all, and then adds a revelation of His moral perfections, on which natural theology was obscure, and, without tradition, even grossly ignorant and dangerously erroneous. Teaching nothing repugnant to the light of nature, respecting man's sinful and ruined condition, but confirming all, it adds a resolution of the great problem of philosophy on the "origin of evil," by the simple announcement, "By one man sin entered into the world." From the teachings of the light of nature, we barely *infer*, that the world we inhabit was once more perfect than at present, but revelation assures us of that which is beyond the reach of human experience, that the earth was "cursed for man's sake." Nor is this all. When it has thus confirmed all which the light of nature dimly unfolded, it adds a great truth, of which the princes of this world know nothing. It reveals a remedy for man in "his estate of sin and misery." It tells of one, who though in the form of God, assumed our nature, humbled himself to suffer and obey, even to the death of the cross, was buried, rose again, and ascended to Heaven, in order to man's salvation. It tells us, that by his sufferings and obedience, many are made righteous. It tells us, that by his prevalent intercession, pleading the merits of his work, an Almighty Spirit is secured, to renew and sanctify our natures. It magnifies divine justice in the sufferings of the Son of God, and divine mercy in the pardon of guilty men. While it opens Heaven to the sinner, it leads the sinner to Heaven. It meets the demands of a holy law and satisfies the requisitions of an enlightened conscience. It provides for filling earth with blessings and Heaven with glories. Natural Religion may lead us, by dim uncertain light, partly through time; this book leads through all ages, and conducts into eternity. It opens eternity, and presents, in all the bright and glowing colours of reality, the eternal states of all the dead, the weight of glory which awaits the righteous, and the blackness of despair which is prepared for the wicked. The light of nature fails when most needed; in the dark hours of adversity, in poverty, sickness, and distress; then the light of the Gospel shines with most brilliancy, making heaven of hovels, converting tribulation into joy, giving smiles for tears, and the garment of praise for the

spirit of heaviness. That pauses and retires confounded from the grave, even of a Socrates. This casts its cheering light athwart the darkness of the darkest tomb—the tomb of infancy.

"Bold Infidelity! turn pale and die,
Beneath the turf an infant's ashes lie;
Say, is it *lost or saved?*
If death's by sin, it sinned, for it lies here,
If Heaven's by *works*, in Heaven it can't appear:
Ah Reason, how depraved!
Revere this sacred Book, the knot's untied,
It died, *for Adam sinned;* it lives, *for Jesus died.*"

The Bible is the great Law Book of civilized nations. Laws have been modified by peculiarities of character, religion, custom, position, and pursuits of men. But the great fundamental principles of the science are found in the last four books of the Pentateuch. The Decalogue, or moral law, contains the germ of all other. No community can be safe, which discards any of the principles here presented. France tried the experiment, in abolishing the law of the Sabbath. The result was written in lines of blood, which the tears of generations cannot efface. No community can successfully introduce any principles not comprehended in this summary. The laws of the Bible, excepting those specially pertaining to the Jewish polity, are adapted to all men, everywhere, for they provide for the common weal, by providing a morality for the individuals. Whether rulers or subjects, learned or unlearned, rich or poor, exalted or humble, each finds here inculcated on him the principles of truth, justice, meekness, contentment, love, tenderness, integrity, and faithfulness. These virtues all need. These possessed and exercised, statute laws would be useless, except as guides, and criminal codes might be abolished. The Bible system of morality provides for all positions and emergencies. It protects infancy, guides childhood, guards youth, instructs manhood, sanctions marriage, prescribes the duties, and guarantees the privileges of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, rulers and subjects, neighbours and friends; and by one great law, "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you," reaches all men, in all time, and in all contingencies.

It addresses man as he is—frail, imperfect, tried, and tempted. It anticipates his bereavements, his distresses, his losses, and holds out consolations. It teaches no stoicism on the one hand, nor puling sentimentalism on the other. For the sufferer, it has sympathies; for the criminal, it has penalties. Now such a scheme is far more conducive to human happiness, and far more soundly philosophical, than any human device. Socialism, from the days of Joanna Southcote to the last specimens presented by Fourier, Wright, Owen, or Rollin, proposes the subordination of individual and domestic interests to those of the community. It seeks to reform masses. It addresses men in the aggregate. But virtue belongs to individuals, and the good of the whole is best promoted by promoting the good of the individuals who make up the community. If they become corrupt, government must fall, or be sustained only by the expensive and uncertain resource of the bayonet. If they be sound, though revolution and anarchy may disturb the order of things, yet good government may rise out of confusion and resume its place and influence.

These teachings of the Bible are important, but they by no means exhaust our synopsis of its contents. It contains a history of the future as well as of the past. Daniel, in one chapter, presents to our view the rise and fall of the four great empires of the earth, Assyrian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman. He then tells us of another,—a kingdom which is an everlasting kingdom, and a dominion of which there shall be no end. Large portions of other sacred books are occupied with the prophetic histories of the progress of truth, and ultimate prevalence of that spiritual kingdom, which is but another name for the system of Christianity here taught. The end is not yet. In all the heavings and shakings of the world, the Bible reader beholds but the notes of preparation for the last great conflict between the powers of earth and hell together and the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. No other book presents on its pages prophecies such as those here related, of whose fulfilment the civilized world has been a witness; and no other even ventures more than conjectures on the destiny of the future, here drawn in all the confidence of the visions of reality. To no

book than one thus extending its histories through all time, unfolding doctrines and precepts for all men, and providing a morality for all races and all ages, can we assign the position, belonging to this, of being A BOOK FOR THE WORLD.

III. That the Bible should have exerted a paramount influence on human interests, would be a natural inference from what has been said. Facts abundantly attest its correctness. We neither assume nor deny that such influence has been beneficial. We are only concerned to offer illustrations of the fact of its existence.

The history of the Jews furnishes a striking instance. Tacitus, about seventeen centuries ago, briefly describes this people, as sacrificing an ox, abstaining from swine's flesh, using unleavened bread in religious festivals, observing the seventh day with religious rites, abhorring idolatry, worshipping one God only, eternal, immutable, and imperishable, and excluding all images for worship, both from their cities and temples. To this he adds, that the customs of the Jews were absurd and vulgar in the estimation of the Romans. This description was drawn fifteen centuries after Moses had delivered the laws under whose influence the national character, here presented, had been formed. For more than a thousand years, amidst revolutions, rebellions, captivities, and desolations, they preserved themselves a distinct people, in the observance of their peculiar code. Conquered, oppressed, trodden down, and spoiled by the Assyrian, the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman; dispersed, despised, and exiled; still, when Tacitus knew them, they were illustrating the principles inculcated in this Book. Nor is this all. The Romans, who despised them as vulgar and absurd, have long passed away. We nowhere recognise the descendants of the men who conquered a world by their arms, and themselves by their vices. But to this day, the descendants of the men who passed through the Red Sea and Jordan on dry land, are living memorials of the most wonderful of all miracles, living fulfilments of the most astonishing and minute of all prophecies, and living illustrations of the most powerful of all moral influences. We search in vain for the

way-marks of Israel among the most memorable scenes of their momentous history. By the deluges and storms of thirty centuries, Sinai and Horeb have become bare and desolate rocks; and grey with a venerable antiquity, they rear their barren peaks amid the awful silence of those vast solitudes. Hebron and Bethlehem are desolate, Jerusalem is a heap. The bittern and the owl, the kite and the vulture, hoot in the palaces and hover among the ruins of Jericho and Petra. We smile in derision at the chattering of the superstitious monk, who pretends to mark the spot where Moses knelt, amid the clouds and lightnings and thunderings which signalized the presence of God's Almightiness, or to indicate the sublimely lonely grave of the first High Priest of the chosen people, or to recognise, amid the rubbish of three thousand years, the remains of Solomon's magnificence. But the events of the memorable periods of Jewish history have left their impressions on monuments more enduring than the marble pile or the everlasting mountains. They are written in a nation's history. In the most remote corners of the earth, unchanging, while enduring all changes; unconquered, while overrun of all conquerors; oppressed, while surviving all oppressors; exiled, yet outliving dynasty after dynasty of the occupants of their land, the Jews are still to be found, true to their ancient faith. The smoke of no altar ascends to heaven; no mitred priest bows before the Ark, with its hovering cherubim in the Holy of Holies. The sceptre has departed from Judah, and a lawgiver from between his feet. The rose of Sharon sheds its sweetness on the desert air, and the cedar of Lebanon no longer falls, to garnish the palaces of Jerusalem. Yet whether in Siberia or Africa, America or China, the free citizen of our republick, or the scorned slave of a Turkish despot, the Jew still adheres to the customs of his fathers, chants in the venerable language of Abraham the Psalms of Zion, and, hoping in the mire of despair, looks for the coming and the redemption of the renowned root and offspring of David. He may have perverted the spiritual teachings of the law, misinterpreted the prophecies, misapprehended the faith of Israel, yet the more wonderful appears the power of these great principles of truth, in thus preserving, as

a nation, a people in perpetual exile, and perpetuating, in all the peculiarities of their identity, a race, whom prosperity has failed to beguile, and adversity failed to compel to a renunciation of their creed, or an amalgamation with the Gentile world.

Since the Christian era, the influence of the Bible, though exhibited in different results, has been yet even more potent. The principles embodied in the New Testament were, to the Jew, a stumbling-block, and enhanced in the minds of the Gentile world the absurdity and vulgarity with which revelation had already been regarded. This system was tendered to Jew and Gentile alike, as the only divinely authorized scheme for man's moral and spiritual renovation. Every class and every interest opposed its reception. Pride, sensuality, and covetousness, the deep-rooted prejudice of the Jew, the jealousy of Rome, and the philosophy of Greece, were all arrayed against it. Its advocates were mainly obscure and unlearned men, fishermen of Galilee and renegades from Judaism. Perils by land and by sea, by traitors and persecutors; bonds, imprisonments, confiscations, exile, and death, were their earthly emoluments. In a human estimate of probabilities, the system possessed no element of success. In opinions based on past experience, it presented every prognostick of defeat. Yet the prognosticks of defeat proved to have been the presages of victory. The principles which men despised were the very principles which sustained the votaries of the new faith. What was it to them, that man rejected, when assured that God received them? What cared they for the flames which consumed their bodies, when confident that chariots of fire awaited their souls? What if demons mocked, when angels cheered them? What if Tyrants frowned, when Jesus smiled? What if earthly houses were destroyed, when they had mansions prepared above, houses not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? What if property was confiscated, when they had laid up their treasure on high? What if severed from their families amid tears and sighs and death, when they looked for a city, whose builder and maker is God, where none shall say "I am sick," and tears and sighs and death shall flee away? What, in short, were all tribulations and distresses, persecutions

and famine, nakedness and perils, fires and swords to men, who felt that in all these things they were conquerors, in the persuasion, that neither death nor life, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature could separate them from the love of God, which they had in Jesus Christ their Lord?

Within three centuries this Book was found, and its system taught, in every nation, from the banks of the Ganges to the pillars of Hercules. The tawny Indian, the swarthy Ethiopian, the rude Briton, and the fur-clad Scandinavian, acknowledged the truth as it is in Jesus. The haughty Roman, the vain Greek, the luxurious Asiatic, and the stubborn Jew, discarding pride and philosophy, sensuality and superstition, bowed to the doctrines of the cross. Learning, and wealth, and political power conspired to honor a Book, which had displaced human philosophy, conferred blessings riches could not buy, and secured a subjection to law, swords and spears could not effect.

The triumph of the Bible was complete, when churches rose on the ruins of pagan temples, and the unmolested worship of the God of the Bible superseded the cruel superstitions and absurd rites of heathenism. From the day when the power which had rallied the enemies of the inspired Volume first undertook to proclaim its triumph, through fifteen centuries, amidst alternations of purity and corruption in the church, light and darkness in the world, amidst revolutions and anarchies, it has held a place occupied by no other book—the pioneer of civilization—the herald of freedom—the bulwark of human safety. Its laws, its morals, and its faith, have given caste to society, furnished fundamental principles of civil and criminal codes to legislation, and established on an immovable basis, whether attacked by Radicalism from below, or threatened by Tyranny from above, the prerogatives of constitutional authorities and the obligations of dutiful subjects.

To the Bible, we owe the security of our persons and property, the confidence of man in man, the industry and enterprise of our country. Its influence has been felt on the decorum and decencies of life, for it humanizes the feelings, and lays the foundation of all true politeness, by imbuing the heart with

sentiments of kindness. The same inspired Teacher who exhorts to be holy, admonishes us to be courteous.

It is impossible to estimate the number or the value of the blessings we owe to the family institution. All those sweet charities and noble impulses which are associated with the endeared names of home, husband, wife, father, mother, children, brother, and sister, have sprung from, and are perpetuated by it. But for this institution we are indebted to the marriage relation, sanctioned by God, and revealed in the Bible, as coming down to us, almost the sole surviving relick of the wreck of Eden's bliss. The Bible alone has placed woman in her proper sphere—this holy domestic circle—there to serve and rule by turns; serving when she best rules, and ruling when she best serves. If any doubt our positions, we refer such to history. Compare pagan Rome and Christian England, heathen China and Christian America, and this influence is still more strikingly displayed in the fact, that those nations which have most felt its power, are those which have advanced highest in the grade of a true civilization. Compare Spain and England, Ireland and Scotland, the United States of Mexico and the United States of North America.

The Bible is the Patron of learning. No family or community will, under ordinary circumstances, long remain uninstructed, which appreciates this Book. It awakens and gratifies the curiosity of children, and increases their thirst for knowledge. It enlarges the capacity of the intellect, and imbues the soul with a love of truth. It cultivates the imagination by its graphic portraits, as well as the memory by its striking narratives. Hence, painters have drawn from its pages the subjects of some of their most distinguished efforts. The greatest poem of our language derived its material from the earliest and most concise portion of its records. Some of the richest veins of thought that man has ever exhibited, have been fed by its heavenly truths. Eloquence has been fired by coals from the altars it has erected; poetry has imbibed inspiration from its sublime and tender conceptions; and musick caught sounds of heavenly harmony from its rapturous songs of praise.

The Bible has a literature peculiarly its own. I shall not

expatiate on the sublimity and beauty of its incomparable style, the perfection of its metaphor, the terseness of its proverbs, the pathos of its sentiment, or the clearness of its postulates; nor need I dwell on the simplicity of its fundamental principles, which makes it the easy instructor of the ignorant, or the profoundness of its hidden mysteries, which makes it equally a fit study for the most learned. I speak, now, of the literature which has grown up around it. For seventeen centuries, it has been the Book of Books. Thousands of volumes have been written in illustration and enforcement of its teachings. Controversies touching its doctrines have filled libraries. Immense folios, by scores and hundreds, composed by men of gigantic intellect, remain to attest the interest it excited more than a thousand years ago. To form a familiar acquaintance with the languages in which it was originally written, requires the arduous labor of years. Grammars and lexicons, and critical comments on those languages, have been the fruit of assiduous and laborious study, by the ripest scholars. The knowledge of the cognate dialects of the Hebrew, and of the Arabic, is highly important to the Bible student; while a familiarity with the classic stores of ancient Greece forms almost a necessary prerequisite to the successful prosecution of the work of an interpreter. Contributions to the apparatus of the Biblical critick have been gathered from a variety of sources. Nearly every language of western Asia, northern Africa, and southern Europe, travels, geographies, histories, and dissertations, in many ancient and modern tongues, have yielded him their subsidies; inscriptions found buried in the rubbish and darkness of centuries, the pyramids and hieroglyphicks of Egypt and Mexico, the vacant tombs of princes, the exhumed mummy of the eastern and western continents, desolated cities, barren wastes, rugged mountains, boundless forests, and lakes, rivers, and seas, have all been explored, to aid the researches of the curious and the discussions of the learned, touching an antiquity older than that of any existing civilized nation; and the results of such discussions and researches have been applied to the illustration and defence of the Bible.

Some of the most interesting periods of life are associated with

this volume. It reminds us of maternal tenderness and care, when our young minds first heard the story of the infant Jesus and the murderous Herod, the touching scenes of Gethsemane, and the cruel death on Calvary; when our wondering souls were first taught the mystery of an incarnate God, a risen, ascended, and glorified Mediator. It is a Book, which that tenderest of all friends, that most faithful and unchanging of all guardians—the mother, places in the hands of her child, leaving her side to find a home among strangers. It is the pledge of sisterly love, the token of fraternal affection. In it, man reads his moral history, his high duties, his glorious privileges, and his noble destiny.

Whether such influences as those now ascribed to the Bible, were ever justly ascribable to any other Book, I shall not discuss. The negative may be fearlessly asserted. But there is a sphere of influence in which the Bible has no competitor. That sphere is the spiritual man. Here are the chief trophies of that power, which, under the divine spirit, it possesses. No position, as to age, rank, character, or civilization, limits this influence. The change of nature effected by it has never been produced by any other agency. Others have professed a competency to change habits, to modify propensities, to curb passions; but as no other religious system ever taught the doctrine of a native and total depravity, by no other was there ever provided an agency for such a complete renovation as the Bible teaches in the doctrine of a new birth. As no other ever taught, that man was at once condemned and utterly helpless to deliver himself, so no other ever provided a salvation so thoroughly efficacious. By this, not only is the enemy reconciled, and the rebel pardoned and subdued, but he is made a son, an heir of God, conformed to his image, and glorified to reign a king and a priest with Christ for ever. And when the change of condition and of nature has been effected through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth; when the faith here revealed has been implanted, the love here discovered has been bestowed, and the peace and joy here unfolded have been established in the soul, then come the exceeding great and precious promises, with all their sustaining power. They bring

solace to the miserable, comfort to the distressed, and hope to the bereaved. They assure us, "Earth hath no sorrow,

"Which Heaven cannot heal."

Those griefs and bereavements for which the world offers no alleviation, much less relief, have, by these promises, been subdued, and even made the bases of a joy unspeakable, and full of glory. To the heart, unfilled by the possessions of time, the Bible has furnished the true riches. To the poor and destitute it has imparted contentment, which, with godliness, is great gain. It has visited the widow, when the light of her eyes has been removed, and told her of a God all mighty and all merciful, the husband of the widow. It has been found clasped in the hands of the orphan, and consoling him with the precious assurance of a father for the fatherless. It has opened to the sick the healing streams of eternal life; and when the last earthly support hath failed, and the most faithful earthly friends retired from the grave, which man must enter alone, then has it revealed a rod and a staff, which, through the dark valley and shadow of death, have guided and supported to the light and glory of Heaven! Surely may we say of such a book, no age can claim it; no nation can appropriate it. It belongs not to a generation, a class, a people, a race, but to man. It is the book of man, A BOOK FOR THE WORLD.

Among many reflections which these views suggest, I shall present but two.

1. Such a book, though for man, is not of man. It could not have had a human origin. No human mind could have conceived a scheme such as that here presented, much less adapted it to the ever varying wants of the world. No other than divine wisdom could prepare, and no other than divine power effectually guard and preserve, such a book as the Bible. This is not the time, nor is it the fitting occasion for a discussion of the divine authority of the Scriptures, and no argument is offered to sustain it; but the views now presented furnish the strongest kind of presumptive evidence—an evidence productive of moral certainty. The unlettered man, who cannot appreciate the arguments for the truth of the Scriptures, deduced from miracles

and fulfilled prophecy, finds within himself, in the conformity of his experience to this revelation, the most satisfactory assurance, and ends all cavils and refutes all objections, by, "*I feel this book to be true.*" So may we say, that the unbiassed, impartial declaration of the world of mankind, could one mind and one voice represent universal experience, would as unequivocally utter the same conviction.

2. It is, pre-eminently, the part of the patriot, the man of letters, the philanthropist, to favour the circulation of the Bible, whose very existence in a community is a pledge for the propagation and influence of those principles which can control men, by enlightening and quickening conscience, which thus sustain law and order, and promote sound learning and pure benevolence. The world must have it. The untutored Indian, the barbarous savage, the cruel pagan must have it. The slaves of tyranny, the victims of superstition, the captives of delusion must have it. Philosophy, education, and government have all tried, and all failed to renovate the world. God hath shined into it by this book, the entrance of whose words has given light. Go on, then, my young countrymen, in your participation in this noble enterprise. Above all, make the Bible the man of YOUR counsel. Imbue YOUR minds with its doctrines, impress YOUR hearts with its precepts, and guide your lives by its principles. Let the dews of heavenly influence water its precious truths, so shall YOU illustrate in your history its ennobling power, experience in your death its cheering consolations, and through eternity aid in proclaiming its triumphs and celebrating man's gratitude to God for the richest of all His blessings, the best of all his gifts,—THE BIBLE, A BOOK FOR THE WORLD.